



A NEWSHEET FOR JOURNALISTS • REPRODUCTION AUTHORIZED

WEEKLY No. 17/88

BRUSSELS, 16-23 May 1988

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This newsheet is published in six languages (English, French, German, Dutch, Italian and Spanish) by the Directorate-General for Information, Communication and Culture of the
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HEALTH: A European Week Against Cancer

Goal: 15% fewer cancer victims in the year 2000.

No fewer than 726,244 people died of cancer in the 12-nation European Community in 1982, out of a total of 3.2m. deaths that year. In other words, for nearly one in four the cause of death was a tumour. And the disease continues to take its toll: if recent trends continue, in the year 2000 one European in three will contract cancer.

And yet cancer is neither inevitable nor incurable. Many people still seem to think so, however; consequently they are either resigned or fatalistic. They either lower their guard or do nothing, although roughly half of those who have cancer stand a good chance of recovery, while effective preventive action has already led to a notable fall in the number of cases of certain forms of cancer. Thus better eating habits have meant fewer cases of stomach cancer, while early and effective anti-smoking campaigns in the United States and Britain have led to a drop in the cases of lung cancer.

Following the June 1985 European summit in Milan, the European Community decided to declare war on cancer. A committee of eminent specialists was set up in January 1986 to prepare the "Europe Against Cancer" campaign for the European Commission. Its goal: reduce by at least 15% the number of deaths from cancer by the year 2000.

If it is to be reached, public opinion must be alerted to begin with. This is the aim of two key parts of the campaign: the 1989 European Cancer Information Year and the European Cancer Week, during the course of which all the actors in the fight against cancer, as well as the media, have been mobilized in a vast information campaign. Television channels in all the EC countries have already broadcast, or will do so, programmes prepared by the European Commission or by the channels themselves at the Commission's request.

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Children have not been forgotten. Five animated cartoons, entitled "Euro-Jim versus Crab Cancer", illustrate five of the 10 do's and don'ts of the European Code against cancer.

Some 400 institutions in the 12 member states (hospitals, cancer counselling and research centres, health centres, etc.) have organized "open days" in order to encourage a dialogue between cancer specialists and the public.

In five Community countries (Belgium, Britain, France, Germany and the Netherlands) free cancer hot-lines have been installed to enable the public to dial for information, especially on the European Code against cancer.

Drawn up by the committee of cancer specialists, the Code consists of 10 rules for the prevention of cancer. The rules are based on the latest European research into the likely causes of cancer and are expressed in plain English. Implementation of the Code, adopted last year, would make it possible to reach the goal of a 15% drop in deaths from cancer by the year 2000, according to the specialists. This would mean that each year some 150,000 Europeans would live longer than might otherwise have been the case.

European Code Against Cancer

1. Do not smoke
2. Moderate your consumption of alcoholic drinks
3. Avoid excessive exposure to the sun
4. Follow health and safety instructions
5. Eat frequently fresh fruits and vegetables and cereals with a high fibre content
6. Avoid becoming overweight
7. See a doctor if you notice a lump or observe a change in a mole or abnormal bleeding
8. See a doctor if you have persistent problems, such as persistent cough, a persistent hoarseness, a change in bowel habits or an unexplained weight loss.

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For women:

9. Have a cervical smear regularly .
10. Check your breasts regularly.

These were not the only initiatives adopted during European Cancer Week. Others ranged from the distribution of booklets on "Europe Against Cancer" to the display of posters containing the Code in doctors' waiting rooms. Their effect on the general public will be taken into account during the preparations for the European Cancer Information Year.

The European Commission has set itself an ambitious programme - but one that remains within the bounds of possibility. This point was stressed by Manuel Marín, a European Commission Vice-President, when he spoke to journalists about the European Cancer Week. He recalled the measures already taken at several levels, notably in the area of prevention.

Three directives have already been adopted, notably on tobacco. The European Commission has drafted new proposals covering 23 substances and eight manufacturing processes which can induce cancer.

Cancer can be conquered. But we must first know how to fight it.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS: Opening up the market for terminal equipment

The European Commission wants to push ahead with its plans to end national monopolies but the member states favour a go-slow.

The telecommunications terminal markets are still very much the preserve of the various national telecommunications authorities, who have a virtual monopoly of the import and marketing of equipment, especially telephone sets, modems and telex terminals. This is a market which has grown dramatically in recent years, both as regards turnover and technological advances. Turnover is currently some ECU 9,500m.* and is expected to grow by around 7% a year.

But the continued existence of a series of tightly segregated national markets could mean much slower growth and this, in turn, could damage the prospects for the European telecommunications industry. The fact is that

* 1 ECU = UK£ 0.66 or IR£ 0.78

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national telecommunication administrations, which have the power to decide which equipment consumers will use, almost invariably favour national manufacturers. The creation of a genuine common market in this sector requires a ban on such national monopolies.

The fact that the networks in the 12 European Community countries have very different technical characteristics is another major obstacle to a single telecommunications market. But the situation is further complicated by differences in the technical specifications that terminal equipment has to meet in order to enable connection without damaging the network.

If European telecommunications equipment manufacturers are to compete effectively with firms in third countries, they must have the possibility of marketing their products throughout the Community. The consumer, too, would benefit, both in terms of price and technology. But the liberalisation of the telecommunications market requires the abolition of the monopolies held by PTTs, along with an end to the frequent practice of requiring subscribers to enter into long-term contracts for the supply of terminal equipment.

In order to drive home the need for rapid action on a matter which has been somewhat delayed, the European Commissioner responsible for competition policy, Peter Sutherland, presented the new Commission directive to the EC's 12 telecommunications ministers when they met informally in Berlin recently.

This directive, which is aimed at introducing competition into the telecommunications terminal market, is based on Article 90 of the Treaty of Rome. This Article expressly bans member states from enacting or maintaining in force any measure contrary to the Community's competition rules, and allows the European Commission to issue directives aimed at preventing national monopolies from distorting competition.

However, at the Berlin meeting several ministers challenged the Commission's right to follow this procedure and indicated they would take the matter to the EC Court of Justice. They clearly believe that if the Commission were to succeed in its recourse to Article 90, an unwelcome precedent would have been established. The Commission, in other words, might be tempted in future to legislate in place of the Council of Ministers whenever a decision on a draft directive was held up.

But Mr Sutherland appears determined to press ahead. He is showing the same determination as during the earlier debate on the deregulation of air travel. The liberalisation of terminal markets is the first major step towards implementing the European Commission's Green Paper on telecommunications and, as Mr Sutherland told the ministers, it is an essential step.

INTERNAL MARKET: A single energy market

The European Commission explains the how and why of it to the Twelve.

Apply the principles of the single market to energy and the results will include lower prices, companies which are more competitive and greater certainty as regards supplies. But even while underlining the benefits of the single energy market in a recent report, the European Commission has drawn up a list of the obstacles which must first be overcome - and shown how to go about doing so.

Energy is one of the economic sectors in which the absence of a genuine common market is proving very costly. The barriers which exist among the Twelve represent a loss of between 0.5% and 1% of the Community's Gross Domestic Product, according to the Commission; in other words, between 5% and 10% of the cost occasioned by the continued existence of the Community's internal frontiers is attributable to the energy sector.

The fact is the sector has more than its share of obstacles. They include national distribution monopolies, discriminatory pricing, technical standards and regulations which vary from one EC country to another, national systems of taxation, a preference for national suppliers, etc.

The Commission is of the view that action is required on four fronts to eliminate these barriers: (1) implement the 1992 programme; (2) apply existing European regulations more strictly; (3) improve environmental protection and (4) adopt specific measures in the energy sector, such as backing for new equipment.

The 1992 target implies, as regards the energy sector, an approximation of VAT rates, which vary greatly at present, and a harmonization of excise duties on petroleum products. It also means the application of Community rules on government procurement to the energy sector, as well as the harmonization of standards and other national technical regulations.

The Commission maintains that each branch of the energy sector has its own priorities, which reflect the obstacles it faces. The approximation of VAT and other tax rates comes first in the case of oil, for example, while it is the harmonization of safety standards which must be given priority in the case of nuclear energy. The need to improve the network of pipelines is of paramount importance as regards natural gas, while standards and monopolies represent major obstacles in the electricity sector.

The Twelve, clearly, will have to act energetically if they are to overcome these difficulties.

TELEVISION: The Community's judges defend cross-border advertising

The Court in Luxembourg rules against a Dutch regulation.

Television audiences throughout the 12-nation European Community should be free to watch all the advertising beamed at them by the television channels, whatever their nationality, according to the EC Court of Justice in Luxembourg. It ruled last month in favour of a programme distribution company, the association of Dutch advertising agencies and 14 agencies and against the Dutch Government.

The programme distributors and advertising agencies challenged the legality of a Dutch law of 1984, banning the retransmission by cable in the Netherlands of advertising carried on foreign channels, beamed by satellite to Dutch viewers. Nor could such programmes be dubbed into Dutch, under this law.

In practice the ban affected the private U.K. channels, Sky Channel and Super Channel, and the French channel TV-5.

Dutch advertisers, who want to be able to use these "foreign" channels, challenged the legality of their country's legislation in the Dutch courts. The Court of Appeal decided to seek a ruling from the European Court of Justice.

The latter held that the 1984 law restricted the free movement of services within the Community. It was therefore contrary to the Treaty of Rome, the Community's "Constitution".

INFLATION: Moderate in March also

A rise of 0.4% in March and 0.9% for the first three months of the year.

Prices in the 12-nation European Community rose by 0.4% in March and by 0.9% for the first three months of the year, a rate of growth identical to that recorded during the first quarter of 1987. Only in Spain and Portugal, and in Greece in particular, was there a sharp rise in prices in March.

For the Community as a whole the rate of inflation was 2.6% in the 12 months to March, as against 3% the year before. The EC did better than the United States (3.9%) but hardly as well as Japan (0.6%).

RESEARCH: Reducing the use of animals as guinea pigs

The European Commission asks the Twelve to coordinate their efforts.

Before chemical and pharmaceutical products can be marketed, they must often be tested to assess their effects on health and the environment. Some of these tests require the use of animals, who may be exposed to considerable pain. Existing Community regulations limit the use of animals to what is strictly necessary. But the European Commission would like to reduce their use even further by encouraging recourse to testing techniques which dispense with animals altogether.

In a report sent to the Twelve at the end of April the European Commission calls for greater coordination of the development of new testing techniques, likely to reduce or even eliminate the pain inflicted on animals. It is also proposing measures that will allow new testing techniques to be incorporated into Community law as soon as they become available.

In the coming months the Commission will propose specific measures aimed at reducing the number of animals used in certain kinds of tests, even while encouraging the use of crabs, for example, rather than mice or rabbits. The Commission is also prepared to fund the development of a European data bank on alternative toxicity testing methods.

FOOD: How to promote bio-agriculture

The European Commission envisages rules and quality controls.

Bio-agriculture is the poor parent of modern agriculture. Because it seeks to do away with chemical pesticides and herbicides, replacing them with organisms that live in the same natural environment as the pests that attack plants, it does not attract the same volume of research funds.

Bio-agriculture, as the Belgian Euro-MP, François Roelants du Vivier, noted in a question to the European Commission, "is not generally of any commercial interest to ... private companies". But the Commission has assured him that it wants to promote bio-agriculture.

One way of doing this is to introduce clear and binding rules and appropriate controls on production, marketing and labelling. This, in the Commission's view, would make bio-agriculture credible in the eyes of consumers, and it is looking, in fact, into the possibility of introducing legislation to this end at the Community level.

TRADE: 47 bright young executives go East

The 8th training programme in the Japanese language and culture gets under way.

Forty-seven bright young executives, from all 12 European Community countries, will fly to Japan on May 23. They will spend the next 18 months learning not only the Japanese language but also Japanese business methods, management techniques and culture generally.

The 47 will be taking part in the 8th training programme for European executives, devised and largely financed by the European Commission as a key part of its campaign to raise the Community's exports to Japan. As in previous years, the 47 will devote a year to learning Japanese. They will spend six months in Japanese firms as trainees. The programme seems to work rather well: of the 261 executives who have taken part in it so far, 80% are currently working in Japan for European companies or in Europe, helping boost exports to Japan.

This year the selectors favoured candidates from the Community's small and medium-sized enterprises.

TRADE: One paradise less for cassette pirates

The EC and Indonesia reach an agreement on safeguarding intellectual property rights.

The cassette pirates, who have been turning a dishonest penny illegally copying the works of European composers and musicians and then selling the copies in place of the originals, can no longer look to Indonesia as a base from which to carry on their global activities. Last month the Indonesian government undertook to extend to recordings made in the European Community countries the protection enjoyed by Indonesian recordings.

The agreement, which comes into force on June 1, is based on reciprocity. Indonesia will protect the rights of composers and performers from those European countries which protect the rights of Indonesians*.

Agreement was made possible thanks to the Community's new trade policy instrument, which has vested important powers in the European Commission. Following a complaint from European professionals, the Commission launched the necessary procedure last May. The Europeans had estimated at \$150m. their losses as a result of the activities of cassette pirates based in Indonesia.

* Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain; the other member states will follow suit.